

Turning Points for a Man in the Running Car

SIX CRISES. By Richard M. Nixon. 460 pp. New York: Doubleday & Co. \$5.95.

By TOM WICKER

"SIX CRISES" is a remarkably readable book, marked here and there by the incisive political judgment and professional ability that Richard Nixon often displayed in his career as Congressman, Senator, Vice President and Presidential candidate. This is despite the fact that, only in its almost book-length account of the 1960 campaign does it achieve immediacy and close relevance to the present and future.

It is a book that might have been expected from Mr. Nixon, that Kafkaesque figure so prominently and yet so elusively in the public eye. It is not the book that might have been hoped for by those who know the man beyond the figure, or by those who sense in him something more than he has ever allowed himself to show.

Mr. Wicker, a member of The Times Washington bureau, followed the candidates during the 1960 Presidential campaign.

Mr. Nixon's account of six significant chapters in his public life falls in the one area where it might have been of greatest usefulness to him as a still active politician and to historians. It offers almost no answer at all to the question that has hung from the beginning over his head: what kind of a man is he?

There are, as in any book, psychological hints about the author. Mr. Nixon allows himself an unusual number of quotations from people who were praising him, and indulges often in moralistic passages about how to act in a crisis, how to keep your temper, etc. His advice is unexceptionable; his tone is sometimes as sticky as his campaign comment on Harry Truman's profanity.

Do these things hint at vanity, or at a nature that needs to shore itself up with compliments and preachings to others? Or are they merely the natural pride of a poor boy who made good? From Mr. Nixon's book, it is impossible to tell.

"Six Crises" begins on a note

of high interest with accounts of the Hiss case and the events leading to the Checkers speech. These were not only sensational episodes in themselves but probably the two that most enduringly wrought the idolatry and the opprobrium — neither quite deserved — that Mr. Nixon attracted so strongly.

Either the Hiss or the Checkers case, Mr. Nixon concedes, might have cost him the Presidency; but he writes too that if neither had happened, he probably never would have had the chance to run on the Republican ticket against John F. Kennedy.

The book sags considerably through lengthy accounts of the problems presented to Vice President Nixon by President Eisenhower's various illnesses, his violence-marred trip to South America and his tour of the Soviet Union and consequent "debates" with Khrushchev. The narrative picks up speed again with a fascinatingly subjective — and naturally self-serving — account of the 1960 campaign.

THIS section is enlivened by sharp attacks on Mr. Kennedy and by an amusing description of how the latter offered Mr. Nixon a mission abroad at their Key Biscayne meeting shortly after Election Day — an offer promptly declined, to the obvious relief of the new President.

There is nothing funny, however, about Mr. Nixon's charge that Mr. Kennedy broke security restrictions for deliberate political purposes in his campaign remarks about intervening in Cuba; nor in his statement that Mr. Kennedy sought President Eisenhower's help in backing off from his Quemoy-Matsu position.

Mr. Nixon's Cuban charge is astonishing, partly for his account of his own response. Mr. Kennedy knew through a briefing by Allen Dulles, he writes, that the Eisenhower Administration was arming and training Cuban refugees for an intervention against Castro. Thus, in openly advocating such a policy, Mr. Kennedy not only was breaking security but was charging the Administration with not doing something he knew privately that it was doing, but could not admit.

"For the first and only time in the campaign I got mad at Kennedy — personally," Mr. Nixon relates. His reaction, as Mr. Nixon reports it, is almost unbelievable. Despite the fact that he considered himself one of the authors of the planned Cuban operation, he went on television in the fourth Kennedy-Nixon debate to attack Mr. Kennedy for advocating intervention. This deliberately false statement of his views, he argues, protected security even at the cost of making him appear "softer" on Castro than was his opponent.

The moral implications of one candidate is believed to be distorting the facts to his own advantage; to recoup the

damage, the other candidate conceives an opposite distortion to be his duty; so both appear in false positions, asking to be supported on the basis of those positions; and the simple virtue of truth is as forgotten as the people's right to know what their Government is doing.

It well may be, if Mr. Nixon's account is accurate, that in such devious action on both sides lay the seeds of the disaster that was to befall the nation when in April, 1961, the Kennedy Administration finally put into operation at least part of what had been planned in the Eisenhower Administration.

AS to Quemoy-Matsu, Mr. Nixon writes that Mr. Kennedy found himself getting the worst of the argument midway in the campaign. Chester Bowles, the Democratic candidate's foreign-policy adviser, then called on Secretary of State Herter to advise him that Mr. Kennedy was willing in the interest of national unity to modify his contention that the islands should gradually be abandoned, if President Eisenhower wished him to.

Mr. Nixon suggests this was an effort to get him to "lay off" the Quemoy issue, but he scrupulously concedes that Mr. Kennedy may not have known of the Bowles venture.

Despite the frankness of these charges, Mr. Nixon's account of the campaign is scarcely one of unblemished objectivity. It is familiar with politics that when the Rev. Martin Luther King was arrested, Nixon refrained

from public action solely because, as a lawyer, he did not wish to risk interference with judicial proceedings; did his desperate desire to carry Texas and other close Southern states influence him not at all?

And why does Mr. Nixon maintain that he had not really thought much about running for President until 1958, or that his trip to Russia in 1959 was merely a patriotic duty, the planning of which his Presidential ambitions did not affect at all?

What is really missing from "Six Crises," however, is not that kind of objectivity—which perhaps cannot be expected from a still active public figure. The book's great lack, instead, is any significant disclosures about Nixon the man—what he really felt, thought, believed, what he really was.

Mr. Eisenhower is portrayed here, for instance, as a sort of benevolent Olympian whose sometimes unfathomable ways were to be accepted gratefully and never questioned. Yet, no public man within memory was cast so often and so directly upon the political mercies of another as was Dick Nixon upon those of Dwight Eisenhower. The strain of this long and frustrating dependence is apparent, despite Mr. Nixon's efforts to hide it.

He notes that it was the President's son, not the President, who welcomed him home from the 1960 campaign. A meticulous list of those who met to give Mr. Eisenhower final advice on whether to run in 1956



Richard M. Nixon speaks in New York, Nov. 2, 1960.

Photograph by Sam Falk.

The Hiss Case

IN politics, victory is never total. The Hiss case brought me national fame. But it also left a residue of hatred and hostility toward me—not only among the Communists but also among substantial segments of the press and the intellectual community—a hostility which remains even today, ten years after Hiss' conviction was upheld by the United States Supreme Court.

The Fund

The crisis of the fund was the hardest, the sharpest, and the briefest of my public life. Because it was decided so quickly, it did not have the lingering effect which some of the more prolonged crises like the Hiss case had had, and were to have. Nevertheless, it left a deep scar which was never to heal completely.

The Heart Attack

I had long been the whipping boy for those who chose not to direct their political attacks against Dwight D. Eisenhower, the most popular President in recent history. The nation's attention would be focused on the sickbed in Denver, but many eyes would be watching to see whether I became brash or timid in meeting the emergency. My job was to be neither.

Caracas

I walked directly into the mob. * * * There were only a few leaders—the usual case-hardened, cold-eyed Communist operatives. The great majority were teen-age students. And what struck me about them was not the hate in their eyes, but the fear. We had no weapons * * * and yet the very fact that we dared to walk toward them seemed to strike fear into their hearts.

Khrushchev

Khrushchev demonstrated to me that when anything of importance was being discussed he is sober, cold, unemotional, and analytical. He will be influenced in his conduct only by the hard realities of the power balance, and to that extent we can exert some control over his actions and our own destiny.

The Campaign of 1960

The incumbent—or whoever represents an incumbent Administration—will generally be at a disadvantage in debate because his opponent can attack while he must defend. But joint TV appearances of candidates at the Presidential level are here to stay, mainly because people want them and the candidates have a responsibility to inform the public on their views before the widest possible audience.

From "Six Crises."

does not include the most consummate politician then in the Eisenhower entourage — Richard Nixon.

Of Mr. Eisenhower's tactics during the political-fund crisis that led to the Checkers speech in the 1952 campaign, Mr. Nixon writes laconically: "The way he had resolved the dilemma was to put the responsibility on me."

This strange reluctance to disclose true and human feelings is in harmony with the general tone of "Six Crises" (except where Mr. Nixon mentions Harold Stassen, whom he derides, or Adlai Stevenson, of whom he is contemptuous).

It is a relief to read that during one of the mob scenes of his South American tour, Mr. Nixon lost his temper and kicked a heckler in the shins; later, he angrily dressed down his staff for no good reason except that he was on edge and wanted to. This makes him seem more like a believable person than almost anything else in "Six Crises."

For in his book, as so often in his public life, Mr. Nixon seems deliberately to have veiled himself, to have shrunk in a basic mistrust, either of himself or of the public, from a direct confrontation of the two. Like Alger Hiss studying Whittaker Chambers' teeth, he is only going through the motions.

He writes, for instance, that he has "always felt that above everything else a man must be himself in a political campaign." That reads well; yet, Mr. Nixon attributes his loss of the crucial first debate with John F. Kennedy as follows: "I had concentrated too much on substance and not enough on appearance."

BEFORE one of the debates, Mr. Nixon recalls, he "knew that what was most important was that I must be myself." Sincerity was to be conveyed at all costs — whether as a matter of appearance or a matter of substance one is left to guess. Surely, simply being one's self hardly requires this kind of worrying and self-admonition. It just happens.

The late Whittaker Chambers, in his last letter to Mr. Nixon, wrote rather movingly: "Almost from the first day we met (think, it is already twelve years ago) I sensed in you some quality, deep-going, difficult to identify in the world's glib way, but good, and meaningful for you and multitudes of others."

What Chambers, a perceptive man, sensed was an inner Richard Nixon under the powder on the beard and the shell of sincerity and the constant concern for appearance. Chambers knew the public figure well, and his judgment of the private man may have been the true one. The tragedy of Richard Nixon is that he has never seemed willing to resolve the question, to make himself truly known to a public that has given him so many chances.